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# News Release

(SC)

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## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST WETLAND RESTORATION PROJECT SET TO BEGIN

### Contracts Awarded for Bolsa Chica Wetlands Restoration

Huntington Beach, Calif. – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today it has executed contracts with Kiewit Pacific Company and Moffatt & Nichol Engineering in anticipation of starting construction on the Bolsa Chica Wetland Restoration Project.

With an estimated construction contract totaling about $63,971,800, the Bolsa Chica Wetland Restoration Project is the largest, most expensive coastal wetland restoration project in southern California and the second largest construction project ever directed by the Service.

Kiewit Pacific Company, the construction contractor, and Moffatt & Nichol Engineers, the construction manager, will mobilize their equipment and personnel, in preparation for the beginning of earthmoving by October 1, 2004.

A Steering Committee comprised of eight Federal and State agencies has coordinated the planning and design of the Bolsa Chica restoration project. Steering Committee members include the Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, State Lands Commission, California Coastal Conservancy, California Department of Fish and Game, and the State Resources Agency.

"Our ecosystem patient is now on the operating table and ready to begin the heart transplant that the Steering Committee and the public have planned for many years," says Jack Fancher, the Service's Bolsa Chica Project Manager.

Bringing the wetlands habitat back to life involves reconnecting the lowland to the invigorating influence of ocean tides, creating a full tidal basin and managed tidal areas, dismantling oil wells and pipelines, restoring habitat, and constructing two bridges.

"The planning and design team have worked long and hard to get to this point and have done an excellent job," said Paul Rauch, the Service's Regional Engineer. "This is the second largest

construction contract ever issued by the Service and we are very excited about getting started on this long awaited project."

Following decades of controversy, 10 public agencies reached an agreement in 1997 that provided for the acquisition of land, and set in motion the planning and implementation of the restoration project.

The Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach provided $79 million to offset impacts associated with their economically port expansion programs, $25 million of which was used to purchase the property. Additional funds have been provided by the California Coastal Conservancy and the Wildlife Conservation Board, largely from habitat restoration bond act funds approved by California voters.

Each agency that is part of the Steering Committee has contributed to the progress of restoration. The State Lands Commission acquired the restoration property and administers the special accounts; other agencies have assisted with preliminary engineering, public workshops, environmental analysis, and permit processing; and, by agreement, the Service is the lead agency for construction of the restoration project.

To assist the Service in the management and administration of the Bolsa Chica wetland restoration project, Moffatt & Nichol Engineers (M&N) has been contracted for construction management. M&N is a full service consulting firm providing planning, engineering and construction management for a wide range of transportation, port and harbor, coastal and urban waterfront projects. The firm was founded in 1945 in Long Beach, California, where it still maintains its corporate headquarters and largest office. M&N currently employs over 300 people in 20 offices in the U.S. and has recently opened an office in Vancouver, British Columbia.

In addition to providing the final design for the Bolsa Chica project, M&N has been a key member of the joint venture team providing construction and program management services for the Alameda Corridor project and is currently providing Program Management Services to the Port of Long Beach for its Mega Terminal Program.

To construct all elements of the restoration project, included the two bridges, jetties, dredging, earthwork, and groundwater barrier, the Service selected the Kiewit Pacific Company (Kiewit). Based in Vancouver, Washington, Kiewit has more than 55 years of experience in California. They have been listed in the *Engineering News-Record* as one of the top 10 contractors in the U.S. since 1995 with annual revenues surpassing $3.7 billion on projects ranging from highways, bridges, and dams to power generation facilities. Kiewit privately owns the largest equipment fleet in North America with over 13,000 pieces of equipment. Kiewit has one of the industry's most impressive safety records with 15 years of continuous safety improvement.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

# Bolsa Chica Restoration Project – Backgrounder

**History of Bolsa Chica**
Bolsa Chica once had a tidal connection but it was forced closed in the late 1890s to create ponds for a local duck hunting club. In the late 1940s, the duck club ceased operations, oil field operations expanded into the lowland, and the Pacific Coast Highway and State beach facilities were constructed. There was also a flood control channel built across the lowland and houses constructed at the eastern edge of the wetlands.

**Details of the Restoration Project**
The adopted restoration alternative includes: a full tidal basin (367 acres), managed tidal areas (178 acres), three new nesting areas (20 acres), dune plant rehabilition area on Rabbit Island (19 acres), the down coast inlet location.

An ocean connection will be restored at the opposite end of its historic location, near present-day Warner Avenue and Pacific Coast Highway. Restoring an ocean connection will require construction of two completely new bridges, one for Pacific Coast Highway and one to provide for continued access to some existing oil field operations. The inlet will cross Bolsa Chica State Beach south of the State Beach's parking lot and structure, to avoid disrupting beach facilities. The regional bike path along the beach would be rerouted onto the new bridge deck.

Two jetties across the beach (about 450 feet from PCH to tip), just reaching the surf line, will be constructed to maintain a stable inlet location. There would be little or no change to Inner or Outer Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, the seasonal ponds and future restoration area (387 ac), the whipstock oil area (25 acres), or the East Garden Grove-Wintersburg Flood Control Channel.

A total of about 2.7 million cubic yards (cy) of dredge material would be moved, with about 1.3 million cy of clean sand going to the ebb shoal just offshore of the inlet location and about 1.4 million cy to build the tidal basin containment berms and nesting areas. Less than about 170 thousand cubic yards of material would be hauled offsite. A groundwater interception barrier would also be constructed between the muted tidal wetland area and the houses on the eastern property line.

In order to construct the full tidal basin, 64 oil wells required buyout and permanent abandonment. Aera Energy LLC is the current oil field lease operator. About 98,000 linear feet of oil pipelines would also be removed from the full tidal basin area of the restoration project. Cleanup and removal of contamination from the full tidal basin part of the restoration project will be completed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service during restoration earthwork, in accordance with a cleanup plan approved by the Regional Water Quality Control Board, Region 8.

Cleanup of the remainder of the State property will be completed by the responsible parties in accordance with the Cleanup Plan for those areas. About 100 existing oil wells and all the whipstock wells next to Pacific Coast Highway will continue to operate in the Bolsa Chica lowlands, until they are no longer economically viable, perhaps 20-30 more years.

**Construction Schedule**
The entire restoration project construction is expected to take between 2 and two and a half years. During the 9 to12 months it will take to construct the Pacific Coast Highway bridge, roadway traffic will be diverted to a detour just inland of the existing right-of-way.

A few areas currently open to the public will be closed during construction, for safety reasons. The Bolsa Ecological Reserve Loop Trail and parking lot, and the south restroom of Bolsa Chica State Beach will be closed, although the beach bicycle path will remain open.

Temporary traffic signals will be utilized on PCH and on Seapoint Avenue, while rock and bridge pilings are transported to the construction site. Most earthwork and dredging is not in public view and relatively little hauling of material to offsite disposal locations is necessary.

The placement of sand on the beach and to create the ebb shoal will be done September through March to avoid the peak beach use season. The last construction activity of the restoration project will be to remove the sand plug in the inlet to allow regular ebb and flow of the ocean tides into the full tidal basin and muted tidal areas in 2006.

**For More Information**
Additional information about the Bolsa Chica Wetlands Restoration Project can be found on the Internet at http://bolsachica.fws.gov